

I think it would be appropriate, Madam President, if the distinguished Republican leader wishes to say something about this tragedy, that after he does, I ask for a moment of silence for the faculty, the students, the administration, and everyone in Virginia Tech—and our country, really. A moment of silence.

Does the Senator wish to speak?

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

TRAGEDY AT VIRGINIA TECH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, let me just, on this side of the aisle, offer my condolences for this unspeakable tragedy to which the majority leader has been referring and join him in calling for a moment of silence.

(Moment of silence.)

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

JACKIE ROBINSON

Mr. REID. Madam President, in July of 1944, 11 years before Rosa Parks became the mother of the civil rights movement, an African-American second lieutenant of the U.S. Navy was court-martialed on charges of insubordination for refusing to move to the back of a segregated military bus. Three years later, and 60 years ago yesterday, that second lieutenant was insubordinate to bigotry once again—this time by breaking Major League Baseball's color barrier. His name was Jackie Robinson.

When Dodgers owner Branch Ricky brought Jackie Robinson to the Major Leagues, many asked: Why Jackie Robinson? After all, the Negro League was filled with talented players from whom to choose. Many were much younger than Jackie Robinson; some, perhaps, even better athletes. The answer, of course, was integrity, character.

Branch Ricky knew that this trailblazing ballplayer would have to be both an athlete and a role model—a role model for African Americans and for all Americans—and no one was better suited to that great challenge than Jackie Robinson.

When Jackie Robinson crossed the chalk lines at Ebbitt's Field that day, he carried the weight of a nation along with him. On one shoulder were the catcalls, obscene gestures, and even threats from fans, opposing players, and even some of his own teammates. But on the other shoulder were the dreams of Blacks, and all Americans, that our country could one day fulfill its destiny of equality in deeds and not just in words.

Jackie's career accomplishments alone would have been enough to earn

our admiration: Rookie of the Year, 6 All-Star games, Most Valuable Player Award, and a World Series championship.

Yesterday, I was visiting my daughter, and especially my grandchildren, here in the Washington, DC, area. I have three grandchildren here. My 16-year-old grandchild, Mattie, was going to have to give a talk to a group of young people. She said she only needed to talk for a couple of minutes. What could she talk about?

I said: Mattie, why don't you talk about Jackie Robinson? Tell them what a great athlete he was. But he isn't known today because he was a great athlete and stole home more than any other baseball player and did all the great things athletically; he is famous today because of his integrity. So that is what Mattie spoke to her friends about.

Jackie Robinson is now a legend. He taught a generation of African-American children that they, too, must be, on occasion, insubordinate to injustice whenever they find it, whether on a bus or on a ballfield or in a board room. Sixty years later that lesson still rings true, from Brooklyn to Los Angeles and every town and city in between.

America is a better place because of the integrity of Jackie Robinson.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, when I was a youngster, I became a fan of the Brooklyn Dodgers for two reasons. One was because of Jackie Robinson. The distinguished majority leader was just referring to his history-making appearance in a Major League uniform for the first time. The other was for a Louisville teammate of his named Pee Wee Reese. He was the one who made, really, a kind of public display of welcoming Robinson amid some of the boos and catcalls he got in the early games when he first played.

Reese went over and put his hand on Jackie Robinson's shoulder. Since he was from the South, I think it was an indication that Robinson was certainly going to be accepted by his teammates and by the rest of the league shortly thereafter and certainly ought to be accepted by the fans as well.

It was a period during which the character of people was being measured; the character of Jackie Robinson in being willing to take on this challenge and tear down this barrier for the first time in American history, and the character of those with whom he was going to be playing. Would they accept him or would they not?

It was a great Kentuckian, Pee Wee Reese, who made it clear that Jackie Robinson was going to be accepted. It was the beginning of a great thing that our country did and, of course, was a breakthrough for many of the subsequent developments that occurred over the years in improving race relations in our country. We are proud to honor the memory of Jackie Robinson.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST MICHAEL R. HAYES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, our Nation owes a debt of gratitude to the brave men and women who fight to preserve it, a debt so great that a tribute befitting their sacrifice may well lie beyond our power to express it. Nevertheless, I ask the Senate to pause today in loving memory of SPC Michael R. Hayes of Morgantown, KY. He was 29 years old.

Specialist Hayes of the Kentucky National Guard died in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom on June 14, 2005, when a rocket-propelled grenade struck his humvee while he was securing a roadside bomb site in Baghdad.

Earlier that year, he had served valiantly in a brutal 30-minute firefight in which 10 guardsmen fought off dozens of Iraqi attackers, killing 26 anti-American fighters.

For his actions as a guardsman, Specialist Hayes earned several medals and awards, including the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.

It is certainly sad but perhaps fitting that Mike would be taken from us while helping his fellow soldiers. Helping others was one of the defining features of Michael Hayes' life.

When Mike wasn't yet 5 years old, he was joined by his little brother, Jamie. Soon after returning home from the hospital, his mother, Barkley Hayes, heard newborn Jamie crying in his crib.

Before she could get to him, however, Mike met her in the hallway, Jamie in his arms, saying, "Mommy, help him to stop crying!"

Mike continued to look after Jamie and younger sister Melissa when all three served in the Guard's 617th Military Police Company and were stationed in Iraq at the same time. His loving relationship with his family was something Mike cherished.

Mike was also part of another family, his soccer family. David Hocker, a friend that Mike was close to, described Mike's love for the game succinctly: "I have never in my life met anyone who loved soccer more than that man."

Mike was a member of the inaugural soccer team during his sophomore year at Greenwood High School in Bowling Green, KY, where he was born and raised. A leader on and off the field, he helped solidify the fledgling program.

He wasn't a bad player, either. Mike earned All-Region and Player of the Year honors at Greenwood, and to this day remains the first and only member of the school's Athletics Hall of Fame.

According to his coach, Todd Tolbert, Mike was the kind of player that made a coach's job easier. Coach Tolbert wanted his other players to watch and emulate his dedication, effort and sportsmanship. In the words of Coach Tolbert, Mike "reached as far as he could reach, and got there."

His determination and leadership, Coach Tolbert recalls, helped establish Greenwood soccer's reputation among